

Magazine Feature Section

Letters from a "Living Dead Man"



Elsa Barker.

To Whom, it is Asserted, These Letters From the "Living Dead Man" Were Dictated.

Tons and tons of literature have come from the presses since the present world conflict, but none has aroused deeper interest than "War Letters From a Living Dead Man," by Elsa Barker, which are considered remarkable, if not unique, in the annals of occult philosophy.

These "letters" have been pronounced wonderful alike by those who accept and by those who refuse to believe their "spiritual" origin. Perhaps the most striking tribute to the genuineness of their essential matter is the fact that, involving such a disputed point in a subject full of such acrimonious contention, no one seems to have expressed a doubt of Mrs. Barker's complete sincerity in her belief in the personal identity of her source of inspiration.

In the spring of 1914 there was published a book of mine called "Letters From a Living Dead Man," being automatic writings from an American judge and teacher of philosophy who had been known to his intimate friends as "X," says Mrs. Barker. "There were circumstances connected with the writing of that book which made any other hypothesis than that of genuine communication from the other world seem untenable to me. It began, for instance, some days before I knew in Paris that my friend had died on the Pacific coast of America.

IDENTIFIES ASTRAL VISITOR.

"In that first book of 'X' I did not state who the writer was, not feeling at liberty to do so without the consent of his family; but in the summer of 1914, while I was still living in Europe, a long interview with Mr. Bruce Hatch appeared in a New York newspaper in which he expressed his conviction that the 'letters' were genuine communications from his father, the late Judge David P. Hatch of Los Angeles, Cal.

"After the 'letters' were finished in 1913, during a period of about two years, I was conscious of the presence of 'X' only on two or three occasions, when he wrote some brief advice in regard to my personal affairs. On the fourth of February, 1915, in New York, I was suddenly made aware one day that 'X' stood in the room and wished to write; but as always before, with one or two exceptions, I had not the remotest idea what he was going to say.

"If the reader will imagine a well-known friend of vivid personality present with him, then subtract for that impression the seeing of the physical eye, leaving only the subtle vibration of the actual thinking and feeling presence, then add the indescribable 'inner sight,' he may begin to realize how I know that 'X' is in the room."

CHILD'S VISION OF AFTER-LIFE.

Perhaps the most remarkable chapter of "War Letters From a Living Dead Man" is that entitled "One of These Little Ones," relating to a child's first impression of the astral world after having been drowned by the sinking of the Lusitania. Whether you believe in communication after death or not you should find the "letter" interesting. It follows:

BY "X."

The story I have to tell you is a sad one, but we are writing of war. It was three days after the Lusitania went down. Leaving the plains and hills of war-harried France, I had come out across the waters to serve where service was most needed at the moment.

Drawing near to the scene of the

disaster, I met a child-soul who wandered up and down looking for something which it could not find—a girl-child of maybe a dozen years, with troubled and bewildered eyes.

"Can I help you?" I asked, taking her by the hand, so that she ceased her restless moving to and fro and paused with me.

"I have lost my mother," she said. "Where is my mother?"

"I do not know," I answered, "but we will look for her."

HOST OF

BEWILDERED SOULS.

It is not always easy for a bewildered soul to find in the astral world another soul whom it seeks, though it is sometimes very easy for a calm soul to find another. As on earth, the one we look for with turmoil in our hearts seems to be held away from us by invisible hands.

Passing along with the child I met many others equally bewildered. All were looking for some one or for something.

"Why are we here?" asked the child. "I thought we were going to London."

"Do you not know that you have been drowned?" I asked.

"Did I really drown when I was in the water?"

"Yes."

"I thought it was a dream, for I have been asleep."

"Yes, you have been asleep, but the

drowning was no dream."

"Then where am I?"

"You are in the other world."

"The other world! But I thought the other world was heaven."

"Heaven is also in the other world."

"You do not mean that I have gone to the bad place?"

"No, you have not gone to the darkest place," I said, "and you will find your way to heaven by and by."

"But why was I drowned? Why did the ship go down? It was such a beautiful ship, and we were so happy playing about the decks!"

"You were drowned because Germany is at war with England."

"But why should they drown me?"

"In an attempt to prove that England does not hold the seas."

"But what has that to do with me?"

"Nothing, my child. It has nothing to do with you. You are only a helpless victim."

"But who drowned us?"

"The commander of a submarine."

"Is he a very bad man?"

"I cannot imagine a good man doing it."

"And why can't I find my mother?"

"Was she drowned too?"

"I don't know yet."

"Then you don't know everything?"

"No, I don't know everything."

"Are you an angel?"

"No, I am not an angel."

"What are you, then?"

"A man."

"And were you drowned, also?"

"No, I came to the other world more than three years ago."

DEAD CHILDREN

WEEP.

The child began to cry. Did you suppose that children never cried after death? Dead children often cry. Would you not cry at the thought of being drowned, if you woke and could not find your mother?

I, too, could have cried with the child, for I have children of my own, and one of them died young.

"Have I been very bad without knowing it, that I should be drowned like this?" asked the little girl.

"No, I do not think that you have been very bad."

As we passed across the rough waters we saw the corpse of a woman floating face upward in the pale light. The child could see it dimly, though not so well as I.

CHILD'S BODY FLOATS BY.

Have you ever seen a living child weeping over the soulless corpse of its mother? If that seemed sad to you, would it not seem sadder to see the living soul of a child weeping over the corpse of a mother whose soul was absent? To me it was the most pitiful of all sad sights.

"Come away, little one," I said. "Your mother is not here."

A little farther on we saw the body of a child also floating face upward in the pale light. I saw whose body it was, and so did the child.

"Why, it isn't pretty any more!" she said.

"Come away, little one!" I repeated. "Come away and look for mother."

But she seemed held fast near the floating thing in the water. No, it was not pretty, but the soul beside me was very beautiful for all its sadness.

"What will become of it?" she asked, awe-struck.

"I do not know."

"Do you think they will bury it somewhere?"

"If they find it they will bury it."

As We Passed Across the Rough Waters We Saw the Corpse of a Woman Floating Face Upward in the Pale Light.

"Could you not tell them where it is?"

"If we wait to look for them, we may not find the mother."

We met many women passing to and fro over the water, mothers looking for their children, wives seeking their husbands, some seeking their own lost forms, others merely passing to and fro in bewilderment and grief.

"It is very sad to die," said the child.

"It is not always sad to die," I answered. "It is sometimes beautiful to die."

"Where is the man who drowned us?"

"Why? Do you want to see him?"

"I want him to see me."

"He will see you his life long in dreams," I said, "whether he lives to be old or dies tomorrow."

Coming toward us across the sea was the form of a woman wringing vapory hands.

"Where is my child? Where is my child?" she was saying over and over.

"Mother, I am here!" cried the little girl and the two forms melted in a close embrace.

"I have found you! I have found

you!" the mother and child repeated over and over, as they clung together.

WHERE CAN SOULS FIND COMFORT?

I remained near them a little while, for I wanted to help them to free themselves from the sadness of their fate.

"Is there no help for us?" she asked.

"It is to help you that I have come."

"But where shall we go?"

"Anywhere, away from here."

As we stood talking together, another woman came toward us looking for a lost child; another child—not hers—came toward us looking for a lost mother.

I am willing to tell you that I did not well know what to do with all these stricken souls. Where could I take them for rest or comfort?

The whole astral region around the earth is full of sadness and crying. Only the strongest and most resolute souls can get far enough away to escape the gloom and the horror. And these newly arrived ones have not the strength; for you must know that in this world we go where our desires and our thoughts go, and we go with our fears and our griefs.

I led the mother and the child to another part of the world and left them with others in the care of two ministering older souls who have given themselves to this sad work. But as one cannot teach a child the differential calculus, so we cannot take to the lofty regions of peace those beings in whose hearts there is no peace.

I shall ask the advice of the teacher as to how much I should tell the world of the awful conditions around us.

MILLIONS OF SAD SOULS.

Even the restoration of peace on earth will not immediately purge the astral world of the sorrows of war. You think that you suffer—and I know better than anyone else how much—but you can escape into the material world, you can walk on the green hills in the sunshine, you can rise occasionally to the place of spiritual calm above the conflict astral and material. These millions of grieving ones cannot go back to the physical, and few of them can yet rise to the spiritual. Their immediate future is a problem for the greatest of the Masters, a problem that taxes the wisdom of the Masters of wisdom.

Hold steady, you for whom there is another day of anxiety not far off. Hold steady; for though you may not realize it, I to whom you look for strength also find strength in you. That is a mystery which I may or may not explain by and by. You are a solid platform from which I can spring, when I need the force of a material base. I shall not over-use it.

If you are unable to stand the strain, alone as you are now, you may communicate with my son; but do that only as a last resort. You must learn to stand alone.

SENDS WORDS OF CHEER.

In my other writing my strain on you was far less, the demand on you far less, the need of your strength far less. You could not have done then what you are doing now, nor could I have done then what I am doing now.

Again I say, hold steady.

The wounds, the tortured faces which you see at night, the pitiful appeals for help, which you try to answer, are only typical of what we see and try to help, nightly, daily and hourly.

I have used the actual substance of your etheric body to build myself an optical instrument, through which I can see into the sunlit world—your world. You will suffer no injury in the long run for this loan that you have made me. Have you not pledged yourself to the service of mankind? Mankind are out here as well as in there, and the eyes I have built of your substance have enabled me to do service which otherwise I could not have done.

Count that with your good karma.

Try It, Brothers.

Two men were talking of hard times. "Does your wife ever grieve because she threw over a wealthy man in order to marry you?" queried Hall.

"Well, she started to once," was the reply, "but I cured her of that without delay."

"I wish you would tell me how," said Hall.

"I started right in grieving with her," replied the other, "and I grieved harder than she did!"